



COMMUNITY INPUT

Update for the Bond Election Advisory Task Force

February 29, 2012

This document is the second of regular updates to be provided to the Bond Election Advisory Task Force on community input received during the bond development process.

This report provides public comments and input received between February 14th and February 28th, 2012 from the following sources:

- Emails sent to bonddevelopment@austintexas.gov
- Voicemails or texts to the Bond Development Hotline (512) 539-0060
- Comments provided online on SpeakUpAustin.org

GUIDING PRINCIPLES SURVEY RESULTS

At the Speak Week and Open House events, citizens were asked to rank the importance of Guiding Principles for the City's bond development process. An online survey with the same information was launched on SpeakUp Austin in early February. The SpeakUp online survey will close on February 29th.

The results below include combined results from the Speak Week booths, Open House surveys, and surveys completed through SpeakUpAustin.org. Based off a sample set of 358 people, this is the current rankings of the Guiding Principles:

<u>GUIDING PRINCIPLE</u>	<u>AVG. RANK</u>
• Infrastructure	2.8
• Mobility	3.0
• Sustainability	3.0
• Cost-Effectiveness	3.5
• New Initiatives	3.9
• Balanced Approach	4.2

1 = MOST IMPORTANT ----◇ 6 = LEAST IMPORTANT

These results will be updated after the SpeakUp Austin online survey closes on Feb. 29th.

OTHER COMMUNITY INPUT

Citizens had an opportunity to provide additional comments for Bond Election Advisory Task Force consideration by sending an email to bonddevelopment@austintexas.gov, leaving a message or text to the hotline (512) 539-0060, and/or commenting on Speak Up Austin.

The following comments were provided through one or more of those methods between February 13 and February 28, 2012. (Organization of comments provided by staff.)



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Bond Development Process comments

- I ranked sustainability last because that word is meaningless unless you define its use. It means different things to different people and without a definition of its use, then it leads to miscommunication and unintended misunderstandings. Ditto with balanced approach -- that could also mean balanced geographically. Stay away from generic terms unless you define them.
- Be clear and above board in the presentation of what is actually included in the Bond package. Ensure that the bond package is in the November election cycle
- As usual, the offered choices limit realistic responses. If any bond item does not specifically impact the health, safety and well being of those that pay the taxes that fund the expenditures, the item should not be considered.
- Transparency.

Affordable Housing - related comments

- affordable housing is a key community priority
- Affordable homeownership is key to increasing AISD performance and providing workforce housing for those families who are continually pushed out of Austin - families who are working, but they cannot afford to purchase a home. Support Affordable Home Ownership in this Bond Election!
- Roads & Affordable housing
- affordable housing
- affordable housing and transportation
- Affordable Housing, Creative Industries/Cultural Initiatives, Affordable Offices

City Facilities – related comments

- I believe the maintenance of Austin Public Library facilities is most important. It benefits all age groups and income levels, providing essential resources to the community.
- Facilities & projects that incubate and grow the creative economy of Austin
- Dear Austin City Council:
The Bond Election Advisory Task Force, in its Feb 16th report, correctly places renovations of the Milwood Library among its higher priorities. This is great news for local residents who make the Milwood Branch one of the busiest and most popular branches in the entire system.

However, there is no mention in the project details of the impending and inevitable expansion of this library to something two or three times larger in the very near future. The Library Master Plan calls for this branch to become a “Regional Hub” and the community sees it as an opportunity to create a cultural center in an area devoid of any other civic space.

It seems foolhardy to engage in over a million dollars of renovations without including some thought and planning into the longer term needs of the facility. It is severely overtaxed already and without beginning the process of conceptualizing what this library will become we will be a decade behind the requirements of the residents before it even gets on the drawing boards.

Certainly the Milwood library needs working plumbing and adequate furnishings. But what it really needs is SPACE. The meeting room is booked a year in advance. There is often no place at all to sit. The kids area is too popular for its own good. No amount of new furniture will improve this basic problem.



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The Walnut Crossing Neighborhood Association has repeatedly voted its support for the expansion of the library and associated improvements to the creek area it borders. We continue to support this and wish the library staff would move forward more energetically on the process. We are all aware that these things take years of planning and discussions, so the question is why are we not doing that now?

It seems usually the case that taxpayers are asked to authorize a huge chunk of cash for a project before anyone considers what it will even be, based only on some hazy abstract that ultimately proves inadequate. I propose that we take this bond election opportunity to authorize a small but sufficient amount of money to create a real, workable concept plan and begin the process of soliciting proposals from design firms, so that when we are able to put the entire project before the voters in the next bond cycle, we will have a couple of years of work under our belts and a concrete set of plans and recommendations.

This will also assure that whatever renovations, repairs, etc. are undertaken from this million dollar expenditure are consistent with the longer term needs of the facility and not something wasted or counterproductive in the long term.

It is without question that the northern edges of Austin have no municipal spaces, no areas for public art, no performance space. It is similarly without question that the current Milwood library is burdened far beyond its capacity and destined to become more so quickly as population increases in the area. Finally, it is obvious that the library has the land and ability to expand to meet this need. All that is required is to begin the process of thinking about it.

If we are asking taxpayers to invest in this essential building's current needs, should we not at the same time consider its future? The local residents are ready to become engaged in the process, but the library staff has to be empowered to begin that process with a clear mandate from the city and some funding to back it up.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this issue.
Javier Bonafont
President, WXNA

Parks & Open Space – related comments

- The city should be making improvements to waller creek in partnership with waller creek conservancy
- parks and recreation
- Do what it takes to save Hancock golf course. u must invest to realize returns.
- Money to update the recreation center at the Hancock golf course.
- The Parks and mainly aquatic facilities need to be funded and given the proper funding to maintain
- Interested in presenting Bull Creek Park for funding to repair damage done by tropical storm Hermine
- Preserving the environment, wildlife, trees and land we currently still have.
- City of Austin has neglected the Norwood house. It is a historic landmark that needs to be restored not demolished.



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Transportation/Mobility - related comments

- Priority should be given to projects that leverage other funding sources such as transportation with TxDOT, CTRMA, Travis County, etc
- Could we find a way to promote options to driving alone?
- Urban rail line should be a high priority
- We want an urban rail don't replace it with medical school
- Let's not continue to build roads which serve the cities surrounding Austin. Focus on moving people around OUR city better.
- Light rail has been proposed for 38 years; the Mayor is right when he says rail is the future of great cities (including Austin). We need light rail routes that solves commuting problems and gives a true alternative to automobile congestion.
- Given that the public does not have all the information regarding critical elements of urban rail (who will operate it, how will the capital costs/O&M be paid for, how does it fit into a regional transit & transportation vision, etc/), urban rail should not be included in new mobility capacity. Urban rail should be its own stand alone priority.
- Burnet Road needs more car lanes, adding bike lanes to a street needing more car lanes is ridiculous. Cyclists do not want to ride in busy traffic areas where car fumes are the greatest. There are many parallel streets to Burnet Road which would benefit car traffic and cyclists. No bike lanes on Burnet Road!
- we need better ways to commute
- Traffic congestion is a big problem, but urban rail is certainly not the solution! Buses are more cost-effective. Also, additional roadways are needed. Give up on the dense urban core idea. Public safety is important, but Austin doesn't need the highest paid police force in Texas. Austin hires too many "consultants" to study every issue - again and again. Don't we have enough smart people already on the payroll to figure things out? We don't need any consultants to give our city officials the answers that they already want to hear.
- Expansion of the current freeway system is critical. The use of the current rail system indicates a lack of interest. Please do not invest more money into urban rail! Downtown will never be an adequate place to raise a family given the low cost alternatives in suburbia. I know you don't want to hear that, but the average age in Austin is rather young which means living downtown for a few years is attractive until the public school system is needed for children, a yard is desired, etc. Take a look at NYC, I previously lived there and can attest that once children come, families move to NJ or CT and NYC has one of the best public transportation systems in the country. Fewer and fewer companies want to office downtown. I have now officed downtown for nearly 10 years, and we will move out of downtown when our lease is up. The time it takes for employees to get out of downtown is so long that no one wants to be here. From the intersection of 2nd and Congress to Mopac and the river usually takes 16 - 18 minutes around 5 pm. Have you done a study for the people that work downtown to identify where they are coming from? I rarely come across a person that travels to 183 or further north. The vast majority of downtown employees live south of Far West along Mopac down to Circle C.
- Design to maximum ridership with a phased implementation process and spend the up-front money to maximize ultimate effectiveness.
- invest in mobility infrastructure in proportion to the mobility mode's level of use - 1% pedestrian, 2% bicycle, 5% mass transit, 92% automobile. Invest in replacing old decaying waterlines to reduce water waste.
- The greatest threat to our quality of life, environmental integrity, economic development, health and safety is inadequate roadway infrastructure. We need to build out all of the approved roadways in the TIP, including SW 45, 290/71 at the "Y", and 71 to the Airport. Thanks.



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- We need to focus on mobility solutions that are regional in scope.
- please focus on transportation initiatives. thanks.
- Transportation needs to be a priority and by transportation I do not think bike lanes or pedestrian trails should be included and while those are certainly worth while endeavors we need to focus on getting cars around town first
- traffic is the most important issue we need to address!
- To whom it may concern,

Sidney Lanier High School would like to submit this letter in support of the City of Austin's efforts to improve sidewalks and pedestrian access along North Lamar Blvd.

We represent a large school zone covering both sides of Lamar Blvd. in the Highway 183 to Parmer area. The Austin Independent School District does not provide transportation for students who live within a two mile radius of the school, leaving the majority of our students walking to school. Most students walk along North Lamar Blvd. in route to and from school every day. Needless to say, the safety of our students and their families is a top priority for our school and community, and the area would greatly benefit from added support from the City of Austin Pedestrian Program.

In addition to safety efforts for our families, we believe that strong partnerships with the area businesses, schools, churches services and neighborhoods are the key to the success of our community. Safety and ease of access between these areas will ensure our community prospers now and into the future. This community is part of a larger effort to make better use of public transportation, reduce our negative global impact in terms of oil consumption and pollution, and encouraging pedestrian and bicycle use will in the long run prove beneficial to generations to come.

Many of the staff of Lanier High School, including myself, not only work here but live in this community. We ride our bicycles and walk to school because we believe this community is worth investing in. We enjoy our local restaurants, stores, parks, and library. We want to be safe as we commute to work and every day life. We hope that the City of Austin continues to seek out ways to encourage safe pedestrian access in our community and all around town

Sincerely, Felipe Trimino, Sidney Lanier High School

- I really like the openness of the effort this year and your online presentations and reports have been great. I'm emailing about the 12th St improvement bond initiative that NHCD put forward to the bond election taskforce. I've reviewed the rankings and I am dismayed that an initiative like the 12th St improvements which have been discussed and identified for nearly 10 years as part of the 11th/12th St revitalization plans, can be "docked" for not being a new initiative. This makes no sense to me. I'm not critiquing the process or staff on this issue, but really want to understand. The recent market study identified approximately \$14million that should go towards 12th St streetscape and mobility improvements, yet 11th Street streetscape improvements cost nearly \$8million in pre-2000 dollars (12th St is nearly three times the length of 11th Street). Furthermore, as Waller Creek improvements are made, and linkages to East Austin are identified, 12th Street streetscape and mobility improvements make perfect sense to link up to what the Waller Creek Conservancy and the City of Austin are envisioning.

I understand this project is at the Transportation and Mobility Taskforce (which meets tonight, but I'm out of town), but I'd like to know when (if at all) there is an opportunity for me and many other east austinites who share my dismay about this issue to come forward and share our feelings to the bond taskforce. I humbly ask that you do share this email with taskforce members.

Again, I appreciate your efforts and those of other staff and volunteer taskforce members. I am simply expressing my concern that East Austin is being shunned by new initiatives on Airport Blvd and other locations simply because they are new initiatives.



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Thank you for your consideration. Best regards, -- Sean Garretson, AICP

- Could you please share my request of the bond committee that the proposed improvements to enhance Burnet Road and N.Lamar Blvd be included in the final draft for the 2012 bond election.
- Roads & Affordable housing
- affordable housing and transportation
- Please help North Lamar!
- Expand the Metro Rail project to run weekends!

Other comments

- yes
- It costs too much to live here. Discontinue programs that are not self supported or look for non-tax funding options. I no longer want a portion of my utility bill paying for the other programs. I don't want to subsidize ACC students that cannot demonstrate financial need. I am tired of paying five times more for water and sewer than other large TX cities
- City of Austin employees should not be allowed to take retirement and a pension and then turn around after a few months of and be re-hired. This is "double dipping" and not right to the taxpayers.
- Density
- the approach should include regional issues and be sensitive to growth occurring to the NW, NE and S of Austin.
- Leverage public and private dollars when possible
- I am a member of Austin Film Society and know they are working hard to support the film industry in Austin, which is really exciting, and is a good fit for our creative city. Bond money would help them create more opportunities for people to work in the film industry, where there are just basically jobs waiting to be filled. Thanks!
- I would say that I approve of economic development projects like the Austin Studio's expansion into the National Guard Building. Not only do these projects provide jobs for Austinites, it allows the City to continue grow in the Creative Media Industries.
- Austin Studios has generated more than \$290 million in economic development for the city just since 2009, through such productions as TRUE GRIT, SPY KIDS 4 and now The Lying Game. The studios are very much an economic engine for the region, not to mention an important part of the culture of our city. The addition of the National Guard Armory will not only provide additional stage space for production, but will also include affordable office space for creative small businesses.
- Austin Studios' expansion into the National Guard Armory is a worthwhile investment based on it's strong track record providing jobs and economic impact for the City.
- Please support the Austin Studios National Guard Armory Expansion initiative.
- Austin Studios has proven to be a money-maker for the City of Austin and many of its businesses. Being able to expand into the National Guard building will increase capabilities of even more film/TV/gaming production.
- I support Austin Studios receiving bond funding to expand into the National Guard building and improve its overall campus. The Studios make a big economic and cultural impact on the city. Adding the National Guard building will expand its impact into digital media and magnify its educational reach.
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The studios are very much an economic engine for the region, not to mention an important part of the culture of our city. The addition of the National Guard Armory will not only provide additional stage space for production, but will also include affordable office space for creative small businesses.

- I would like to encourage the Task Force to agree to fund the Austin Studios National Guard Armory expansion. The Austin Film Society has been a vital contributor to Austin's art life and economy. The growth of Austin Studios will continue to add economically to the growth and art and vibrancy of Austin throughout the nation and the world. We love the exciting film vibe in Austin and so do thousands of visitors! Help us keep it growing!
- Austin Studios should receive bond funding to expand into the National Guard Building and improve the overall campus. Austin Studios has generated more than \$290 million in economic development for the city just since 2009, through such productions as TRUE GRIT, SPY KIDS 4 and now The Lying Game. The studios are very much an economic engine for the region, not to mention an important part of the culture of our city. The addition of the National Guard Armory will not only provide additional stage space for production, but will also include affordable office space for creative small businesses.
- I am a member of Austin Film Society and know they are working hard to support the film industry in Austin, which is really exciting, and is a good fit for our creative city. Bond money would help them create more opportunities for people to work in the film industry, where there are just basically jobs waiting to be filled. Thanks!
- Establishing a Medical School in Austin
- Austin Studios expansion should be included in the bond. Last bond improvements paid off exponentially.